Making Health Happen



School Councils



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"It is better to build children than to repair adults."

Unknown

This kit has been created by the **Ontario Healthy Schools Coalition** for school councils. We hope you find it easy to read and helpful.

Many thanks to our ad-hoc committee who, like countless others, care about the future of children and youth in our province.....

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Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	1
A. INTRODUCTION	3
B. THE IMPORTANCE OF HEALTHY SCHOOLS	4
C. WHAT IS A HEALTHY SCHOOL?	4
D. WHAT IS COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL HEALTH?	5
E. STEPS TO CREATE CHANGE	
Form a Committee Select a Leader Involve and Empower Student Leaders	6
4. IDENTIFY STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES	6
5. SELECT A PRIORITY	8 8
8. EVALUATE YOUR PLAN	
F. INVOLVING OTHER PARENTS	
G. BENEFITS OF A HEALTHY SCHOOL	
H. SCHOOL HEALTH ON THE NET	12
I. REFERENCES AND RESOURCES RELATED TO SCHOOL HEALTH	13
J. COMMUNITY RESOURCES	13
APPENDIX A: STUDENT POPULATION SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY	14
APPENDIX B: SAMPLE ACTION PLANS	16
APPENDIX C: SAMPLE LETTER	18

"Great minds must be ready not only to take opportunities, but to make them."

"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do." Mark Twain

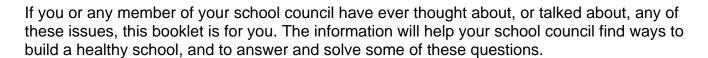
A. Introduction

Welcome parents*! The healthy development of our children should be a major priority of Canadian society, yet a great number of today's children are adopting unhealthy lifestyles or have difficulty accessing healthy foods or physical activity opportunities due to financial limitations. The concern is that these children tend to become unhealthy adults who will face an increased risk of many illnesses such as cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and other chronic diseases (Tremblay & Willms, 2003) thus leading to increased adult morbidity and mortality in years to come (Canadian Pediatric Society, 2002).

There is growing recognition that schools are in a unique position to contribute towards reversing this trend. A comprehensive school health approach is needed and this toolkit can help you start an initiative that will benefit your entire school community.

Have you, or members of your school council, ever asked any of the following questions?

- Why are children and youth mixed up in bullying?
- Why are some children and youth overweight?
- Why is there never soap in school washrooms?
- Do children like coming to school?
- Why do some children and youth eat unhealthy foods?
- Why do some children and youth take drugs and drink alcohol?
- Why do some children appear sad?
- Why do some children and youth hate school?
- Why are some teachers stressed?
- Why are some students stressed?
- Why are more children getting Type 2 diabetes?
- Why are children's asthma and allergies more noticeable at school?
- Why are some kids having sex at a younger age?
- Why is it hard to get my son to brush his teeth?



^{*}The word "parent" is used throughout this document to refer to parents, guardians and caregivers.



B. The Importance of Healthy Schools

For optimal learning, we need students and teachers who are healthy. We also need schools to be environments that reinforce health messages. The physical, emotional and social atmosphere of a school affects what and how children learn. Schools must be a place where children and youth feel safe, secure and at ease. It is everyone's job, including parents, to create a safe, healthy situation.

Schools can have a positive impact on student and staff health, and *parental involvement* is critical to the success of this effort.

C. What is a Healthy School?

A healthy school sees the big picture. It uses what it has - social, emotional and physical - to protect and improve the health and well-being of staff and students.

It respects the body, spirit, heart and mind of every person within the school community.

A healthy school is free from prejudice, bullying and fear.

It is a place where people, culture and traditions are valued.

A healthy school is clean and safe, and values learning.

It has proper lighting, ventilation, heat, fire and safety protection, clean water and proper waste disposal.

A healthy school shows its health with positive student-teacher bonds; positive role models; healthy food choices; and opportunities for physical activity.

ELEMENTS OF A HEALTHY SCHOOL
Coordinating Components

Since each school is different, each must define the type of school it wants to be.

Health Promoting Environment Social Support Instruction or Health Education

School Community

^{*}Adapted from Directorate of Agencies for School Health – BC formulation of Comprehensive School Health, Canadian model.

D. What is Comprehensive School Health?

Comprehensive School Health is the term used for school health in Canada. It is "a broad spectrum of programs, policies, activities and services that take place in schools and their surrounding communities...designed to affect not only individual health behaviours, but also to improve the environments where young people live and learn." (McCall, 1999, p.4). In order to achieve a healthy school environment the social and physical surroundings are adapted in ways that preserve and enhance the health and well-being of students and staff.

There are 4 main elements:

- Instruction: involves the use of a quality health and physical education curriculum that
 includes the physical, emotional and social aspects of an individual's health. Teachers
 instruct the curriculum so students gain knowledge and skills to control and improve
 their health and well-being (CAHPERD, 2005).
- 2. Services: involves the support of school board professionals and outside community groups that help the school. These provide assistance to students and staff as well as offer services that reinforce the health curriculum, both inside and outside of the classroom setting. Services may include, but not be limited to: guidance, social work, psychology, public health, police, recreation, child protection. The activities of service providers may include, but not be limited to: counseling, referrals, screening, seminars, workshops.
- 3. **Supportive Social Environment:** involves parents, students, teachers/school staff, and others working together towards a common goal. It also involves peer support and adult and peer role modeling. It is an environment that respects and accommodates individual differences and is free from discrimination and harassment.
- 4. **Healthy Physical Environment:** involves an environment that is free from physical hazards, such as poor air quality, unsafe school playgrounds and unsanitary conditions (Anderson & Stathakos, 2003; CAHPERD, 2005).

E. Steps to Create Change

Here are ways your council can work toward a healthy school.

1. Form a Committee

A school may want to make changes that benefit their students, staff and others; however, someone must start the process. This is where a school council can be the leader of change within their school community.

If parents on your council are worried about your school's health, others are too. You may want to form a health committee as a sub-committee of school council. Or, your school may have groups/clubs that are already working on health issues, for example, a Safe School Committee or club such as Ontario Students Against Impaired Driving. They may be interested in expanding their scope to include a wider range of healthy school issues. Whatever format you choose, be sure your school health committee connects closely to your school council and school improvement planning process. Include as many people as possible from as many different groups as you can:

Parents

- Students
- Principals, Vice-principals
- Teachers
- Support staff (e.g. custodians, educational assistants)
- Public Health Staff (e.g. nurse, health promoters, nutritionists, inspector, etc.)
- Health agency volunteers
- Service groups
- Business

2. Select a Leader

If the group does not have a leader, pick one. The leader steers the ship and must be keen to protect and improve the health of the school. Select someone who is in touch with people, agencies, parents and groups that can help your school. A leader knows how to build teamwork. The leader can be a parent, educator, public health professional or student.

3. Involve and Empower Student Leaders

Students are a hidden resource within the school setting. In order to promote and advocate for change, students are necessary on any school health committee. It is stated many times that young people must be empowered in order to make a difference in their lives, especially when it pertains to their own health. They learn best from their peers and are influenced by their peer's actions. Young people, when organized and equipped with a vision for change, are a powerful force. When adults connect and organize with youth, they can change school conditions together. The adults come to understand the power of youth as effective leaders. Youth who organize can change other people's understanding of the role of youth in the health of society. However, youth need adults to help them plan, implement and evaluate a school health initiative. Together, everyone can make a difference!

4. Identify Strengths and Weaknesses

Determine the needs, interests and health of students and staff. Try to identify your school's strong points and weak points, and then set goals to build a healthier school.

The first step is to name the issues you would like to tackle. Ask students, teachers, administrators and parents about issues. Do a survey (see Appendix A: student survey sample) or focus group discussions to obtain the different perspectives in your school.

Make sure all information stays confidential. When you sum up the information keep it basic to prevent finger pointing (e.g. "promote programs to all staff" **not** "the teachers should take part more often). Build bonds rather than create tension.

The list below suggests areas to consider when doing surveys. Ask public health staff who deal with school health to help you find or create one that will meet your needs.

Physical Environment

✓ Health and safety: Are boxes stacked too high? Is the school messy?

- ✓ Is the kitchen clean? Does the cafeteria offer healthy foods?
- ✓ Are classrooms, gym, playgrounds and washrooms clean and safe?
- ✓ Are classrooms too crowded?
- ✓ What is the condition of equipment, paint, and lighting?
- ✓ Are children and staff safe?
- ✓ Is the school tobacco and drug free?
- ✓ Does graffiti and vandalism happen often?

Social/ Emotional Environment

- ✓ Does everyone at the school share the same beliefs, values and views?
- ✓ Do policies and procedures reflect the values and beliefs of students, teachers, staff and administrators?
- ✓ Are the expectations for success the same for all students? Is it consistent? Do teachers expect more from one group and less from another?
- ✓ Is bullying, favoritism, prejudice or homophobia present? Is the school trying to deal with these issues?
- ✓ Are students welcome in all courses females in shop, males in family studies?
- ✓ Do daily events include or exclude certain groups?
- ✓ Is there openness to the views and beliefs of others?
- ✓ Do you talk with parents and outside groups often, or does it seem the school has a "closed door" policy?
- ✓ Communications: Is it open or does it come from the top down?
- ✓ When it comes to decisions, is everyone involved, including students, or a select few?
- ✓ Is there a feeling of "**Us** vs. **Them**" between students, staff, administration?
- ✓ Modeling staff behaviour: Is the message consistent? Does it match what is taught in class? Does discipline conflict or promote healthy behaviour?
- ✓ Awards and recognition: Are students, groups and staff praised for their healthy actions?
- ✓ Innovation: Do you encourage parents, students, teachers, staff, etc. to become involved, bring new ideas forward, or are they out of the process?

Access to Services

- ✓ School health committee: Is it needed for a healthier school? Would you support a school health committee? Would you join a school health committee?
- ✓ When students or staff have health-related concerns, do you know what services are available within the board or community to refer them to?
- ✓ Does your school have strong connections with community resources, e.g., police, parks and recreation, local health clinics?
- ✓ Evaluating progress towards goals and objectives: Will people take part in evaluations to measure improvements in the school's health?

✓ Past successes: Has the school received grants or money for health issues?

Health Instruction

- ✓ Do students receive physical and health education at least 3 times a week?
- ✓ Do teachers have enough health education resources?
- ✓ Do teachers balance a healthy message with extra-curricular supports? (e.g. healthy rewards for doing well)
- ✓ Are students urged to join healthy activities outside of school?
- ✓ Do health projects extend beyond the classroom?

5. Select a Priority

Many issues may come forward as areas needing attention. As a group, select one as a first priority. It is often wise to "start small", as early successes encourage a committee to tackle more difficult issues later on.

6. Create an Action Plan

Once your committee has named a health issue, develop an action plan. To have significant impact, a plan should address as many of the four components of the Comprehensive School Health model as possible: instruction, services, supportive social environment, and healthy physical environment. A plan may include:

- ✓ Goals, objectives, and activities: for example-
 - Goal [lofty statement] This school will have a supportive environment, free from bullying and harassment.
 - Objective [specific, measurable] -To lower the incidence of bullying by 10%.
 - Activity [several activities may be included in the plan] Host a workshop for parents to educate about ways to combat bullying at school.
- ✓ Who will take the lead to ensure the activity is carried out?
- ✓ What is needed to make it happen?
- ✓ What is the timeline?

Refer to Appendix B for 2 sample action plans.

Note: A diagram on the next page describes how to plan action on a specific health issue using the Comprehensive School Health model.

7. Implement the Plan

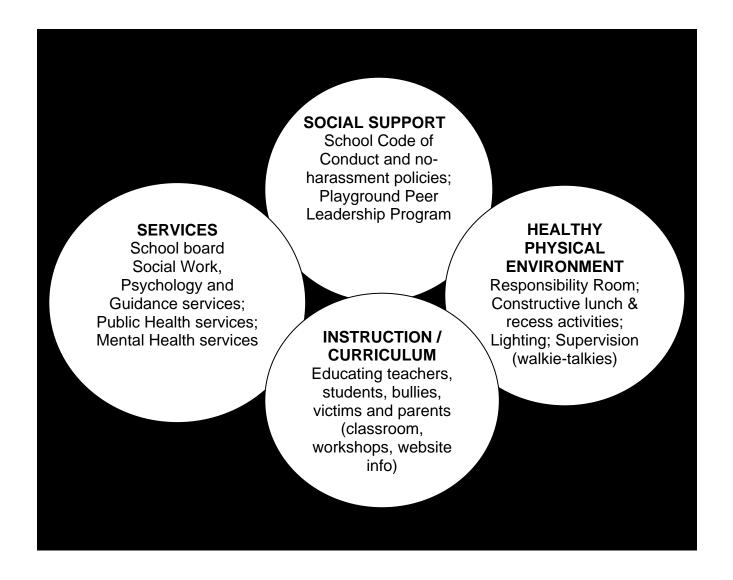
Involve many members of the school community in implementing the plan, not just the school health committee. This will expand the commitment to health. Be sure to inform all other school groups about the planned activities of your group, to ensure coordination and reinforcement of messages.





Example:

"Bullying" Issue



Adapted from: Ronson, B. & MacDougall, C. (2004, October) *Review of Healthy School Models*. Power Point Presentation.

8. Evaluate Your Plan

Evaluations help improve and expand plans by looking at how things went and the successes and challenges you experienced. Committees need to review how they met their objectives and how their activities led to achieving their overall goal.

Looking at how you worked as a group will give you insight into how you can improve in the future.

Here are some useful questions to ask when evaluating your plan and activities:

- What issue is your committee trying to deal with?
- Are you meeting your objectives?
- Is your plan working?
- Did it run as planned?
- Did it involve the broader school community?
- Did you make good use of available resources?
- Did you address all four elements of Comprehensive School Health or just some?
- How much did it cost?
- Did the benefits outweigh the cost?
- Did the plan result in positive changes at the school? If so, what changes?
- What would you differently next time?
- Did you receive the level of support you expected?
- Did your committee receive support from all levels? (e.g. administrators, teachers, support staff, students, parents, outside agencies)
- What are the visible features of the program?
- What are some of the barriers your committee experienced?

9. Celebrate Successes

It is important to publicize successes to provide positive reinforcement not only to the school health committee, but also to the school as a whole. Celebrations increase understanding of what the concept of a "healthy school" means, and they strengthen school-wide commitment to the goal of creating the healthiest school possible. School health committees are more likely to continue functioning if members have fun.

F. Involving Other Parents

Getting parents involved is vital to the process. There are many ways that parents can become involved. Here are a few examples:

- Encourage school administration to include health in their School Improvement Plan.
- Get health-related speakers for school council meetings.

- Hold family nights to talk about health issues. Involve the outside community.
- Ask the school population about health issues.
- Invite agencies/partners in the school area to join in.
- Promote and stage certain school events (e.g. Walk to School Day, Healthy Lunch Day, Turn off the Screen Week, etc.)
- Tour the physical area of the school to see what issues need instant action.
- Volunteer for playground duty.
- Start a lobby group to have the school board adopt the "healthy school" process.
- Write to community people (including other school councils) to raise awareness and seek their support for creating "healthy schools" in your area. See Appendix C for a sample letter.
- Sponsor a healthy fundraiser (e.g. dance-a-thons or sell cheese instead of chocolate bars)
- Tour the playground to see if there are any safety problems.
- Team up with outside organizations to promote health (e.g. Heart and Stroke Foundation for Jump Rope for Heart and Hoops for Heart).
- Look for guest speakers on certain topics (e.g. health, safety, environment, etc.)
- Talk with teachers and administrators to monitor the program progress.

For more information on parent involvement, visit http://tortoise.oise.utoronto.ca/~aanderson/csh/roleof.htm

G. Benefits of a Healthy School

Health and success at school go hand-in-hand. If you improve the conditions for education, and the health of those who are part of the system, everyone wins. Here are a few of the benefits of a healthy school (Henderson, 1993):

- Improved student performance
- Higher level of dedication to education by staff and students
- Safe school environment
- Active school population
- Increased health awareness
- Improved health education
- Greater health protection i.e. hand washing, vaccinations, etc.
- Self-care awareness
- Lower health care costs
- Fewer days missed
- Lower costs to recruit staff
- Closer ties between staff and students
- Improved teacher retention
- Lower drop-out rate

- Improved morale
- Improved school image
- Greater level of commitment by parents and community
- Attraction of high quality staff
- Greater willingness to accept change

H. School Health on the Net

Public Health Agency of Canada / Health Canada

www.hc-sc.gc.ca/main/hc/web/datahpsb/children/english/sec1-1.htm "The Comprehensive School Health Model"

http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/vc-ss/welcome e.html "Voices and Choices" Planning for School Health Assessment Tool

http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/dca-dea/publications/pdf/schobc-esrcscj_e.pdf A National Assessment of Effects of School Experiences on Health Outcomes and Behaviours of Children

Canadian Association for School Health Executive Director: Doug McCall

School Health Listserve: email dmccall@netcom.ca
Safe and Healthy Schools: www.safehealthyschools.org

Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance

www.cahperd.ca (see Health Education and Quality School Health info & http://www.cahperd.ca/eng/health/documents/PartnersForHealth.pdf for Partners in Health: Schools, Communities and Young People Working Together)

The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

Comprehensive School Health Website: http://tortoise.oise.utoronto.ca/~aanderson/csh/

Healthy Physical Environments in Schools

www.healthyschools.com

British Columbia Ministry for Children and Families "Healthy Schools Resource Guide" http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/publications/ecd/healthy_schools_website.pdf

British Columbia "Action Schools"

http://www.actionschoolsbc.ca/content/home.asp

Contains information, resources and a guide for teachers.

British Columbia Report of the Provincial Health Officer "An Ounce of Prevention: A Public Health Rationale for the School as a Setting for Health Promotion" http://www.healthservices.gov.bc.ca/pho/pdf/opervention.pdf

Calgary Board of Education CSH Information

http://www.cbe.ab.ca/linknlearn/resources.htm

Alberta Centre for Active Living

www.centre4activeliving.ca Look for "Wellspring" Fall 2001 Newsletter

Saskatchewan School Plus: A Vision for Children and Youth -Toward a New School, Community and Human Service Partnership in Saskatchewan

http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/partner_aboriginal/policy/docs/roleofsch/roleofsch.pdf

Manitoba - Healthy Schools: A Conceptual Framework - Promoting Healthy Kids, Schools and Communities

http://www.gov.mb.ca/healthychild/healthyschools/

Ontario Physical and Health Education Association (Ophea) www.ophea.net

Ontario Healthy Schools Coalition [secretariat: Ontario Public Health Association] www.opha.on.ca/ohsc

Voices for Children www.voicesforchildren.ca

I. References and Resources Related to School Health

Anderson, A., & Stathakos, J. (2003). Better Health, Better Schools, Better Futures: A Guide for Teachers! *Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto.*

Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance [CAHPERD]. (2005). *Quality School Health*. Available from http://www.cahperd.ca/eng/health/about_qsh.cfm

Canadian Pediatric Society. (2002). Healthy active living for children and youth: Position Statement (HAL 2002-01). *Pediatric Child Health*, 7(5): 339-345. Available from http://www.cps.ca/english/statements/HAL/HAL02-01.pdf.

Henderson, A.C. (1993). Healthy Schools, Healthy Futures: The Case for Improving School Environment. Santa Cruz, CA: ETR Associates.

McCall, D. (1999) Comprehensive School Health: Help for teachers from the community. *The Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance [CAHPERD] Journal, 65*(1), 4-9.

Tremblay, M.S. & Willms, J.D. (2003). Is the Canadian childhood obesity epidemic related to physical inactivity? *International Journal of Obesity and Related Metabolic Disorders*, *27*(9):1100-5.

J. Community Resources

There are many volunteer health agencies in your community concerned about school health. They have free or low-cost resources and services to share. Below is a list of some community agencies that can help or even join your school health committee.

- ✓ Public health department
- ✓ Police services
- ✓ Mental health agencies (e.g. Canadian Mental Health Association)
- ✓ Heart and Stroke Foundation local chapter
- ✓ Ontario Lung Association local chapter

- School board representative focusing on school health
- ✓ Family services
- ✓ Social services
- ✓ Addictions services
- ✓ YM/YWCA
- ✓ Recreation department

APPENDIX A: STUDENT POPULATION SCHOOL HEALTH SURVEY ELEMENTARY LEVEL

Your school health committee is doing a survey on student health issues. Your input is voluntary. The information collected will help us design activities to meet your needs. All information will remain confidential.

1.	Are you:									
		Male		Female						
2.	Wha	What grade are you in?								
	□ 4		5	□ 6	□ 7	□ 8				
3.	Do y	ou understa	and the terr	n "healthy	school"?					
		yes		no		not sure				
4.	What issues are important to you? Please check the boxes that apply.									
		□ sexual health				alcohol and drug use				
		conflict				peer pressure				
		dating				relationships with family				
		relationships with friends				loneliness				
		suicide				racism				
		bullying/school violence the environment weight control physical activity				stress				
						happiness				
						healthy eating				
						tobacco use				
		playground safety								
		other, ple	ase descril	oe:						
6.	What is the best way to deal with these topics? Please check.									
		in-class discussions				student-led activities	ties			
		guest spe	eakers			school-wide wellness days				
		school community events				peer counseling				
		teachers	leading by	example						
		develop school healthy policies (more physical activity time, healthy eating, etc.)								
	П	other please describe:								

7.	Are you interested in learning more about "school health"?						
		yes		no		not sure	
<u>OPTI</u>	OPTIONAL QUESTION:						
8.	8. Are you interested in helping out with a school health committee?						
		yes		no		not sure	
If you answered "YES" please print your name, grade and phone number below.							

APPENDIX B: SAMPLE ACTION PLANS

Goal	Objective	Activities to Meet Objective	Timeline to be Done	Who will Take the Lead?
To improve healthy eating	To host healthy fundraising	Contact public health dietitian for resources and supports.	January	School Health Committee Vice -Chair
behaviours among staff and students	events during the year.	Arrange a visit by a dietitian for parents and teachers about healthy fundraising ideas.	February	
	To work toward the development of a healthy school cafeteria.	Gather input from parents, staff, and students about healthy food choices.	September – May	School Health Committee and Principal
		Gather information from other schools that offer healthy food choices. Outline steps they took.		

Each school council should adapt this table to fit their needs.

HEALTH ACTION TEAM

SAMPLE PLANNING TOOL

Use one page for each priority issue your school is working on

School Year: 2004-05 School:

Priority Issue: Physical Activity Goal: To improve the fitness level of students

Objective: To increase the number and variety of physical activity opportunities for students in addition to those currently offered.

Focus (target group): School student population (whole school)

COMPONENT	EXISTING ACTIVITIES/ STRENGTHS	ACTIVITIES	MEASURING SUCCESS	TIMELINE	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?
Curriculum/ Instruction/ Health Education	◆ K-8 HPE Curriculum	◆ Training for teachers so they can use various resources (Moving on the Spot/Active Energizers) to offer physical activity breaks during class time	◆ Students take part in in-class physical activity breaks; Improved student focus in class	◆ January	Public health physical activity staff and School Board staff provide training at the January Professional Learning Centre day
Services (Health, Social, & Other Services from School Board or Community)	 Public Health (especially physical activity staff) 	◆ Link with local Parks and Rec representative to determine if there are programs available nearby or programs they could offer in the school	Students take part in more after-school physical activity programs	◆ November	Parent arranges for Parks and Recreation person to attend a Health Action Team (HAT) meeting
Supportive Social Environment	◆ Participated in "Go Outside the Box" week last year	 Register for "Go Outside the Box" week again this year Offer a Kilometre Club that is open to all students on a 3-times per week basis Training for students and teachers on playground games conducted by outside consultant 	 ◆ Target group takes part in campaign and submits completed activity chart; students indicate increased awareness of the need to be more physically active ◆ 25% of students sign up and participate in km club ◆ Older students are trained as peer leaders and regularly use playground leadership kit provided by the public health department 	◆ April◆ Nov◆ Jan	 ◆ Teacher to register school ◆ Principal to seek a teacher and/or parent and some intermediate students to lead the club ◆ HAT student reps advertise for interested junior and intermediate students willing to be trained by TPH/TCDSB staff as Outdoor Games Peer Leaders at the HAT PLC day in January.
Healthy Physical Environment	Playground area is clear, with some grass and some asphalt	 Buy recess activity bags for all classes Request line painting on asphalt 	 Students use materials in recess activity bag and teachers are responsible for managing materials Students use painted line area for recess activities 	◆ Jan◆ April	 Principal to order activity bags Principal to order line painting

Adapted with permission from the Toronto Catholic District School Board, Toronto Public Health and Middlesex-London Health Unit.

APPENDIX C: SAMPLE LETTER

Dear

A healthy school environment is important to everyone. A focus on the health of children and youth needs to start early and to do that, we need the community's help to create a healthy school.

With that said, our Healthy School Committee would like an opportunity to give a presentation on "Health Promoting Schools / Healthy Schools". Our presentation is about 20 minutes long and it will provide you with information on how you can make a difference in your school community.

If you are interested in arranging a presentation, please complete the attached sheet and return by mail or fax to the address indicated.

Thank you for your attention and interest in this important matter.

Sincerely,

(Name)
Chairperson, Healthy Schools Committee

Note: The purpose of this letter is to offer presentations to interested groups, such as: businesses, student groups, youth groups, churches, and other school councils. The presentations can serve to increase awareness of the issue of healthy schools, to advocate for a healthy school movement in your community/school board, and/or to ask for help within your school with certain services.

Healthy Schools Presentation Registration Form

Name:					
Contact:					
Address:					
Phone:	(H)	(W)			
Email:					
Please check Yes, we are times (in order	below: e interested in having a preser of preference) that you would	ntation on h d like the p	nealthy school resentation.	s. Please list 3	3 dates with
<u> </u>	<u>Date</u>		<u>Time</u>		
1					
2					
3					
\square No, we are	not currently interested but p	lease conta	act us again in	the future.	
☐ No, we are	not interested.				

Please mail, fax or email this form to: (provide your own information below)